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BALTIMORE SUN  
7 June 1985

# CIA trying to find out if Soviet can track subs

WASHINGTON (AP) — The CIA is studying whether the Soviet Union can detect and track America's nuclear missile-firing submarines, considered the most invulnerable part of the nation's nuclear defenses.

The study has been given new impetus by revelations in the Walker family spy case, in which some secrets about U.S. tracking of Soviet subs may have been passed to the Soviets, according to people in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill familiar with the project.

The study, expected to be finished next year, was ordered by Congress in a secret \$10 million appropriation approved in 1985.

Details about how the U.S. subs move quietly, and the way the United States tracks Soviet subs, are among the nation's most closely guarded military secrets.

Pentagon spokesman Michael I. Burch was asked yesterday if the study is tied to the spy allegations surrounding former Navy Chief Warrant Officer John A. Walker, Jr., and three others under arrest — his son, Michael; older brother, Arthur, and friend, Jerry A. Whitworth.

"These things are constantly under review, and any time there's a potential for compromise, that factor is put in the review," Mr. Burch said. "This is an evolutionary process of constantly trying to keep our forces superior to the Soviets."

Mr. Burch, questioned about damage that may have been done by the spy ring, said: "The potential loss of information always gives us concern. The secretary [Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger] has acknowledged that we have taken proper precautions to try to offset any advantage that the Soviets might have gained out of this episode. But the investigation is still under way and therefore the full extent of the loss is not known."

Mr. Burch declined to discuss details about the CIA study or even to acknowledge its existence.

Because of the difficulty of tracking objects in the vast reaches of the oceans, subs are considered less vulnerable to detection and destruction than land-based missiles and long-range bombers, the other two legs of America's three-legged nuclear deterrent.

The CIA study was ordered in the wake of reports that Soviet planes may have found some of the missile-firing subs, said the sources, who declined to be identified.

Senator William Cohen (R, Maine), a member of the Senate Intelligence Oversight Committee and chairman of the Armed Services seapower subcommittee, said "The Walker case is very serious, but just how serious remains to be seen."

"The Navy is doing damage assessment right now on the Walker case, but the CIA study goes beyond that," Mr. Cohen said. "The CIA study is part of an ongoing assessment about the subs."

But some Navy officials dispute the need for the study. They argue that the submarines remain invulnerable to attack and say that condition will exist for the foreseeable future, said the sources.

"There might not be a specific need for a study now because we don't think things have changed that much since the last study," said one official, "but part of the sub program is an ongoing program about what the other side might have learned."

The U.S. fleet includes 31 Poseidon-class subs, each with 16 missiles that have 10 warheads apiece. It also includes five of the newer Trident-class subs, which each have 24 missiles that carry up to eight warheads apiece.

The United States has more than half its long-range nuclear weapons aboard subs; the other half are divided between B-52 bombers and land-based missiles.

The CIA will try to determine what advanced technologies the Soviets might be using to track the American subs, the sources said.

While the Soviets have a much larger fleet of subs which are generally capable of moving faster and diving deeper than the American boats, the U.S. subs are much quieter and thus more difficult to find, officials say.

Both superpowers put a high premium on tracking each other's subs.

The U.S. tracking network includes the Sound Surveillance System (SOSUS), an array of listening devices linked by cables and strung out along the seabed.